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ABSTRACT

The 19 articles on teaching methods collected in this seventh report of the NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices focus on Afro-American ideas, communication, and teaching in megalopolis. Specific topics discussed include (1) the teaching of reading and writing to disadvantaged children, (2) the utilization of black authors and poets in literature courses, (3) slides, tapes, soul music, and "happenings" as techniques for motivating student writing, (4) a pilot core program designed to aid the disadvantaged student, (5) the replacement of textbooks by films, paperbacks, and mimeographed papers to provide relevant material in confronting contemporary social and economic problems, (6) placing an emphasis on Negro leaders in teaching disadvantaged second-grade children, and (7) play performance as a method of teaching literary drama to students for whom English is a second language. (This document previously announced as ED 033 947) (JM)

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CLASSROOM PRACTICES in Teaching English 1969-1970

A Seventh Report of the NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices

Cochairmen: Edward R. Fagan and Jean Vandell

FOCUS: Minorities: Communicating the Dream's Responsibility

National Council of Teachers of English

Consultant Readers of This Manuscript

Roger Hyndman, Los Angeles, California, City School Districts
Clarence C. Lipscomb, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction
Delores Minor, Detroit, Michigan, Public Schools

Design

Norma Phillips, NCTE Headquarters

NCTE Committee on Publications

Robert F. Hogan, NCTE Executive Secretary, Chairman
Charlotte S. Huck, Ohio State University
Henry W. Sams, The Pennsylvania State University
Mildred E. Webster, St. Joseph, Michigan, Senior High School
Enid M. Olson, NCTE Director of Publications, 1960-1969
Eugene C. Ross, NCTE Director of Publications

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The Committee on Classroom Practices in the Teaching of English

COCHAIRMEN

Edward R. Fagan
Department of Secondary Education
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

Jean Vandell
Easterly Parkway Elementary School
State College, Pennsylvania

MEMBERS

Allen Berger
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

Marjorie Burns
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Morris Landis
Department of English
David Lipscomb College
Nashville, Tennessee

Lucile Lindberg
Department of Elementary Education
Queens College of the City University of New York
Flushing, New York

A. J. Beeler, *ex officio*
Director of Curriculum
Louisville Public Schools
Louisville, Kentucky

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Introduction

Rain, wind, and misinformation provided the Committee on Classroom Practices with serendipity at the fall 1968 meeting of the Council in Milwaukee. This serendipity was an unusually large turnout for what was originally planned as a routine committee meeting. Scrapping their formal agenda, committee members agreed to open the meeting to general participation so that the wishes of those attending might be used to focus the contents of the 1969-1970 edition of *Practices.*

This focused edition of *Practices* contrasts with the six previous editions which displayed a more general format. The Executive Committee of the Council recommended that the 1969-1970 Committee on Classroom Practices try the single theme idea on an experimental basis. How successful this idea is will depend upon Council members' responses to it and upon the extent to which the new format provides the services for which the committee was originally appointed. The Executive Committee's rationale and the Classroom Practices committee's thinking about possible themes for the 1969-1970 edition of *Practices* were described to those attending the committee's meeting in Milwaukee. About one hundred NCTE members representing elementary, secondary, and college affiliations agreed to discuss the selection of themes for *Practices* and to make recommendations regarding same. Their deliberations produced the following rank-ordered list of suggestions for focused themes:

Afro-American ideas
Communication
Linguistics
Teacher preparation
Teaching in megalopolis

These themes, generated by what the committee felt was a possible cross-section of Council members, were arbitrarily condensed to produce the focus of this edition, namely, Minorities: Communicating the Dream's Responsibility. Such a focus, the committee felt, incorporated the Afro-American, communication, and megalopolis themes. Requests for manuscripts addressed to this theme were solicited through the Council's national publications, through many publications of NCTE affiliates, and through personal letters sent to colleagues and authors who the committee felt might be interested in addressing themselves to such a focus.

As a result of these solicitations, the committee chose nineteen manu-

scripts to be included in this edition. Articles selected range from approximately two hundred fifty words to twenty-five hundred words in length; they cover many phases of the language arts at both the elementary and secondary levels. The committee hopes that all articles will be read since many of the practices described can be adapted for various grade levels.

Readers of this edition of *Practices* will be quick to note that some of the practices described are neither new nor innovative. But such readers should judge the practices within the limits set by this edition's focus. When such a qualification is made, old practices carefully honed to inform the specific behavioral objective implied by "Minorities: Communicating the Dream's Responsibility" have an aura of the new about them. Point of view is crucial to the application of some of the practices which follow. Point of view is also important with regard to the applications teachers make of the practices described. Each teacher will select those practices which seem adaptable to his classes, and the committee hopes that by this eclectic process each reader will expand his language arts perimeters to the point where his students can catch a piece of the Dream.

The cochairmen wish to thank those who have helped the committee to prepare this publication. They are especially grateful to Allen Berger, Morris Landis, and Lucile Lindberg, who with them read and evaluated all manuscripts considered.

Edward R. Fagan
Jean Vandell
Cochairmen

EDWARD R. FAGAN
Department of Secondary Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Prisms

"To be or not to be" black in our teaching of English is a question all of us will confront in the decade ahead. Shall we give "separate but equal" treatment to black literature, or shall we incorporate black writers into the mainstream of literary history? The polarized question is ironically displayed at the literary level on the National Council of Teachers of English 1969 calendar where the epigraph for May is drawn from Langston Hughes' "Dreams":

> Hold fast to Dreams
> deleted due to copyright restrictions
> That cannot fly.[1]

But the epigraph for September is a quotation from Thoreau's *Walden:*

> If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them....

Politically, such polarization and its attendant questions are framed by statements such as those of Muhammad Ali at a Colloquy held at Penn State and front-paged on May 24, 1969, *Daily Collegian:*

> The only peaceful solution to the racial crisis in America is total separation of the races.... The Negro wants to force himself into white life, wants to eat with whites and marry white women. The black studies his own culture, marries black women, and tries to make his own people clean and respectable.

Yet Bayard Rustin, a civil rights leader from New York, in an interview with newsmen before addressing the American Jewish Committee

[1]From "Dreams" by Langston Hughes in THE DREAM KEEPER. Copyright 1932 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and renewed 1960 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted by permission.

(as reported in the Waterbury, Connecticut, *The Waterbury American*, April 28, 1969, p. 19), said:

> What the hell are soul courses worth in the real world? In the real world, no one gives a damn if you've taken soul courses. They want to know if you can do mathematics and write a correct sentence.

Educationally, such polarization is reported by two of our black colleagues who teach English. C. James Trotman in the April 1969 edition of *Pennsylvania School Journal* describes the posture of the black student in America in "Anatomy of Action." David Baren in the May 1969 edition of the *Phi Delta Kappan* asks, rhetorically, "Do You Dare... Negro Literature and the Disadvantaged Student." Both authors insist on separate treatment of black literature—at least for the present.

"Why teach black literature at all?" asks a middle-aged school teacher in the heart of rural Pennsylvania; "We don't have any of them in our schools." How does one explain to isolated whites the problem of white racism? What rhetoric, what crisis is necessary to activate such nervous systems to the message embedded in *The Fire Next Time?* The question raised by the Pennsylvania teacher was in response to the contents of a Department of Public Instruction bulletin (*From Slavery to Protest*) which detailed contents and procedures for the utilization of black materials in social studies and English classes. Her attitude, if typical, is an ill omen for the efforts of state education departments to reduce white racism. But her attitude also reveals one of the reasons our black colleagues insist that unique units focused on black literature be taught in American schools.

Attitudes described in the foregoing material with respect to the stance teachers take in their presentation of minority materials are tacitly present in this edition of *Practices*. Arbitrarily such materials fall into three categories: *integrated*, *American ethos*, and *minority ethos*. "Integrated" material has content and method as its focus; minority arrays are implicit and subordinate to a given practice; for example, core units for the disadvantaged. "American ethos" material has content as its primary focus, but this content is tied to and considered part of the general American culture; for example, Negro literature as "Negro" is defined by Muhammad Ali. "Minority ethos" also has content as its focus, but the content is used to enhance the outstanding qualities of the minority, to instill pride in the accomplishments of the minority as a minority; for example, "Helping Second Graders Learn about Their Leaders" in this edition of *Practices*. Materials in all three categories, the committee feels, would be useful in any English class. It would take little amending to

adapt one category to meet the criterion for another. And if white racism is as prevalent as government reports indicate, then the recommendations of minority spokesmen for units focused upon the minority ethos should be given high priority in our English programs.

In winnowing materials for this edition of *Practices*, several "not-so-promising" practices were discovered: "teaching is telling"; "art for art's sake"; "kill them with kindness"; and "the word is the thing." Such questionable practices are hard to justify in any classroom, but they are particularly onerous in minority or disadvantaged classrooms. Since these questionable practices are sometimes well disguised in academic precepts, it seems wise to examine them further within the *Practices*'s focus, that is, "Minorities: Communicating the Dream's Responsibility."

"Teaching is telling" is a questionable practice because the teacher serves as the Oracle of Delphi. Couched in lesson plan form, this practice is phrased as: "To introduce. . . , to provide. . . , to describe. . . , to organize. . . "—all phrases revealing the teacher's control of classroom contents and processes. Concerning minority groups, many teachers are presumptuous in assuming that they are engaged deeply enough with minority problems "to introduce" students to minority literature, "to provide" relevant background materials about what *the teacher regards* as a minority author. And no matter how good such a teaching plan looks on paper, the research studies which report data about teaching minority groups show that the probability of success with the "teaching is telling" procedure is very low. Instead of telling, mutual exploration of an agreed upon minority problem employing some of the group processes described in the articles which follow would increase the probability of success.

"Art for art's sake" is a questionable practice because the teacher immediately alienates the students by insisting that the social concerns in Baldwin's essays, Hughes' poetry, or Hansberry's drama are less important than the artistic form of the genre. Or, at the grammatical level, he insists that diagraming sentences provides skills for the recognition of style necessary to the appreciation of syntax. When questioned about such rituals, the teacher justifies them on the grounds that "no lowering of standards" will occur in his course and that students had best try to "measure up." There are no data to support the stance that diagraming serves any useful purpose for improving students' understanding of oral and written composition, nor do data show that any one method of teaching literature is better than any other for deepening students' literary critical skills. These judgments can be checked in the third and in the in-press fourth edition of the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*.

Other data based on studies of classroom strategies for teaching minority groups show that the social implications of literature are most useful for "turning on" minority groups. Some of the articles which follow demonstrate this counterpoint to the "art for art's sake" platitude.

"Kill them with kindness" is a questionable practice once epitomized in a black comedian's suggestion that schools start a "rent-a-Negro program." Psychologists classify this practice as reaction formation, which they further define as overcompensation to a particular phenomenon. Such exaggerated compensation is still prejudicial, but the prejudice is sugared over. Practices suggested within this category ranged from setting up a special section for minorities with no grading, through courses on soul music, to saturating a school for one week with a black arts theme. Such kindnesses would result in (according to the authors) "schoolwide recognition of blacks." All of these strategies have in common the fact that the black is regarded as human but unequal. "Unequal" because all these devices imply that the black could not compete with the white: different grading system; a special, easy course; and one week (out of thirty-six) to exercise Christian charity only to return afterward to "bigotry" as usual. Such facades are easily penetrated by perceptive blacks. To avoid the "kindness" syndrome blacks must be involved in the planning, curricular design, and evaluation of school strategies to reduce racial tensions. In many ways the "kindness" practice is more insulting than outright bigotry because it is so covert.

"The word is the thing" is a questionable practice because it is academic and ritualistic. The academic logic starts with the idea that since language is comprised of words, vocabulary drill is one key for the success of minority groups. Appended to the vocabulary strategem is a concern for usage and its consequent drills to improve dialect. From vocabulary and usage conceits comes the pattern drill ritual where artificial sentences full of blanks are filled with "appropriate" words to produce conversations which occur almost exclusively in textbooks. Minority group students, subjected to this ritual, study vocabulary lists derived from some standardized text or, worse, a grade-level list, memorize the meanings so that they can be displayed on a weekly test, then reinforce the uses of these words through conversation drills or slot-filling in sentence patterns. When this ritual is derived from minority literature, some teachers feel that they have discovered a promising practice for improving the language efficiency of minority groups. Again research data about the teaching of vocabulary reveal the ephemeral grasp of word meanings which occurs through the uses of such procedures. Alternatives

to these academic rituals for vocabulary study are suggested in some of the practices which follow.

All these aspects of *Practices* and not-so-promising practices filter through organic prisms. The resultant spectra reveal our colleagues' attempts to cope with crucial issues of languaging among minority groups. While the problems posed by minority spokesman concerning contents and procedures for educating their students are great, their resolution is implicit in the professional behavior of English teachers who through their promising practices are daily "communicating the dream's responsibility."

James A. Hamey
Ashland, Oregon

Orwell and Steel Guitars: Soul for Inspiration

Chance meetings sometimes yield productive relationships, and such a union recently occurred as I attempted to develop a comprehensive and meaningful writing assignment. Carefully listening to the soulful sounds of a Johnny Rivers album,[1] I sought a prevalent beat suitable as an audio-aid in a listening unit for a ninth grade English class. At the same time I was trying to devise a culminating writing assignment over Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a novel recently completed by a tenth grade English class. I wanted the perfect writing assignment: highly motivational, both intellectually and emotionally, contemporary and relative, and not too complicated. Overshadowing these qualities, the need for an assignment to satisfy the individual needs pulsating through the students provided me with a difficult task.

Working concurrently on two such seemingly incompatible thoughts furthered my efforts on neither, and, almost finished with the record, I pushed the writing assignment far back into my mind. "Work Song," the third to the last on the second side, was beginning. As I listened to both lyrics and instrumentation, a passage mentioning "breaking rock on a chain gang" passed through my audio track, but my visual image was of a horse rolling rocks toward a windmill. The horse was Boxer, the Stakhanovite of Orwell's *Animal Farm* who represents any dedicated man whose ignorance and gullibility blind him to the truth. My pulse quickened as I replayed the album.

The first song, "Seventh Son," readily brought to mind Napoleon's self assessment. "I'll Cry Instead" posed itself as a theme song for Snowball, an ineffectual individual who doesn't tend to his affairs and is, therefore, vulnerable to radical change because of his neglect. "Stop in the Name of Love" served as the theme for Snowball and for the overthrown humans, as well as for those of my students who, for any number of possible reasons, found themselves in a minority situation and thereby felt persecution and sought relief through the currently popularized con-

[1] Johnny Rivers, "Meanwhile Back at the Whiskey A' Go Go," LP-12284, Imperial.

cept of brotherly love. "Parchman Farm" had numerous lines, not to mention its title, which were readily applicable to the entire animal farm commune. Quickly I began checking other albums in my record library.

A Righteous Brothers album[2] proved extremely useful on a more abstract level. The title song, "Soul and Inspiration," contained perfect parallels to the devotion and esteem which all the animals manifested for their chief pig, Napoleon. That same song also providel an attitudinal theme for those students who needed to identify with the contemporary ideal of "soul" as a means of both stylistic and personal triumph. "Change Is Goin' to Come" beautifully fit the mood which existed on the farm prior to rebellion of the animals. It likewise contained an attitudinal parallel to the contemporary iconoclastic insurgence of change into the hearts and lives of America's and the world's youth. The following week I entered class in a creative whirl.

With my portable stereo in hand and the two albums for reinforcement, the presentation, student reaction, and subsequent papers were an astounding success. Quickly motivated toward a comparative writing assignment, the students combined the musical expression from their private world with the novel from the academic world, and this possibility helped the students feel quite secure in their assignment. Suggesting other singers such as James Brown and Stevie Wonder further enhanced the motivation. The two albums presented caught hold of the hearts and imaginations of the discontented minority students, directed them toward the discrimination within *Animal Farm*, and allowed them to hear and feel their own inner torments. As the class listened to the albums, faces glowed and pencils jotted notes as students selected connections to their favorite characters. The catharsis of writing these reactions, of seeing parallels to themselves in Orwell's novel, was natural, spontaneous, and academically positive. The content of their finished papers echoed the emotional involvement which went into their own formulation and the formulation of their papers.

With stylistic directions for guidance, the writing assignment proved completely satisfying for both students and teacher; the students felt "soul" and wrote with soul. Behavioral and attitudinal changes, the greatest accomplishments to arise from the assignment, were clearly manifested in the minority students. Providing the opportunity to say it like it is for them by seeing it in another source conveyed both the reality of and the potential satisfaction for their individual and collective plights. For their teacher, the ability to structure that effect without

[2] The Righteous Brothers, "Soul and Inspiration," V6-5001, Verve.

being condescending and by remaining within course content proved to be an enlightening and rewarding experience, and the assignment has been given annual status in the black book on the corner of the desk.

Joseph M. Kirman
Department of Elementary
Education
University of Alberta

Effective Reading Techniques for Disadvantaged Children

What do you do when the overwhelming majority of your sixth grade class is reading on a third grade level or when you suddenly realize that student vocabulary is so limited that for most of the time you might as well have been saying nonsense syllables? Matters grow worse when no one will raise his hand to tell you that he doesn't know what you are saying. How do you cope with such a situation or begin to fill in the gaps in your students' education?

As a specialist in social studies, I have no intention of posing a qualified reading consultant. But for almost seven years I taught in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto district where my fellow teachers and I were confronted with finding solutions for reading problems. Retardation in reading among our pupils that was staggering, as are the statistics one finds in urban ghettos concerning reading. It is shocking.

Since there was very little valid material available to teachers of urban Negro children, most of us had to improvise. It was strictly an exercise in pragmatism. Try it. If it works, use it. If not, try something else. In this way many of us began to develop functional techniques that we found to be effective in our classes.

Because of the disparity in vocabulary between the students and teachers, we never took language for granted. That is, we never assumed that the children understood what we were saying. Every multisyllable word was defined on the spot. Not, mind you, in a formal manner, but informally by using a synonym and then giving a description of what we were talking about.

An example of this would be the word "defend." My seventh grade class did not know what the word meant. In introducing it to them I would use the following techniques:

"The soldiers had to defend the fort. That is, they had to protect it

because the enemy wanted to grab the fort. Who can tell me what 'defend' means?

Note that the word "grab" was used in the example. "Seize" probably would have been a better word, but chances are the children did not know it. Eventually, this word would have been used in the lesson.

Another problem that worked against the children was their chronic desire to answer a question in the briefest possible manner; consequently, many never gave themselves a chance to use their new vocabulary words. Because of this, we insisted that all answers be given in full sentences. We would often ask questions that forced students to use their vocabulary words.

Reading was always incorporated into our lessons. In social studies lessons the children were required to spend a portion of each period using their textbooks. Many such lessons were concerned more with the use of the textbook as a tool than with obtaining content material for the lesson. We taught the children about the function of an index and a table of contents, the use of bold or italic print in the body of the text. Sometimes we would have an index race. I would write a topic on the board, and the children would use the text's index to look up the information. The first one to find the correct page was the winner. Eventually we built to the point where the child who found the correct page also had to find where on the page the information was located, and, at a later stage, to read, summarize, and recite the information. At this latter point, the material was of direct value to the social studies lesson. It might be added that such drills performed in all subject classes reinforced the ability to use the textbook as a tool. This aided many students in improving their ability to do independent study assignments.

Some of our English teachers were ingenious in their approach to the reading problems faced by the youngsters. One interested his class by writing plays having social significance for the students. They would then read and memorize the scripts for an assembly presentation to the entire school. Another English teacher brought in menus, from which each child ordered an imaginary meal. She then reinforced his remedial math lessons by having him compute the hypothetical bill. The same teacher also obtained blank social security forms and, with her class, filled them out. Many subject area teachers found that comic books were excellent attention holders. One teacher used *Mad* magazine where parodies of interest to her subject were available.

To aid urban Negro children with their subject areas, including reading, the teachers of my former junior high school observed the following general rules:

1. Keep the material relevant to the student's frame of reference.
2. Make sure the students understand what you are talking about.
3. Use games where possible to avoid tedium.
4. Review and reinforce new material often.
5. Where possible, be concrete, not abstract.
6. Use much praise and reward.
7. Avoid long term motivations.
8. Keep lessons brief and fast paced.
9. Use varied activities for longer lessons.
10. Don't be afraid to innovate.

If the teacher applies the above ten injunctions to lessons, and barring disruptive class situations, he will be able to achieve some measure of success with his students. This list is not a panacea. The school is only one factor in the lives of these children. Until all factors influencing the ghetto child are adequately dealt with, the finest pedagogical techniques and the most brilliant teachers will not be able to accomplish adequately their desired aims.

C. James Trotman
Lincoln University
Lincoln, Pennsylvania

Writing for the Disadvantaged: Journal Jottings

As teachers of English, we are concerned with motivating the disadvantaged to communicate and, more specifically, to communicate in writing. Journal Jotting, a writing program used successfully in an inner city junior high school,[1] is adaptable to all levels of instruction in all regions.

This writing program transcends all grade levels, IQ's, reading levels and general academic performance—past, present, and future. Ultimately, however, the success of this and any other program depends on the common denominator for all teachers of all disciplines—tireless and unyielding effort.

The journal is analogous in form and content to a diary, having the same attributes: it is personal (indeed, highly intimate) and continued daily. The journal is personal in that only teacher and student share its contents; that it be written daily is no steadfast rule.

The journal is started in the most informal way any facet of a discipline is introduced. I spoke with my students about the journal's form and possible content, not referring to traditional grading at all. Easily the most saleable factor in this presentation (as my students later said) was the idea of experimentation: if the journal did not prove a successful learning experience, they could vote to dismiss it. Such a procedure may at a glance appear hazardous, but it permits students to involve themselves directly in the curriculum and, more importantly, to develop criteria for assessment. Establishing such criteria proved, as it usually does, more difficult than establishing the journal structure.

Students use a sheet of notebook paper, folding it in half to insure intimacy and to give a book-like structure. They record the date for each entry. At first the content is optional. In the early stages students may write on any topic they wish. Optional writing is a hardship for some, as informal observations indicated, but with time and encourage-

[1] Charles Y. Audenried Junior High School, School District of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

ment to experiment, this obstacle is overcome. Moreover, it is not corrected initially for errors in common usage. Once students adjust to optional writing, the quality itself increases. Students are also concerned about marks. No traditional marking is involved in this program. What does become an evaluative instrument for student and teacher is the teacher's comments. These comments are vital. They form a nucleus for guiding improvement in writing and communication generally and become one of five distinctive features of the journal.

The first of these distinctive features is genre. Traces of every conceivable genre appear in the journals—from elements of the novel to the elegiac poem. Considering the grade level of these students, the form these elements take may in many cases be crude and unpolished, yet they are recognizable. Such fictional elements as plot, denouement, and particularly characterization are easily discernible; nor is there difficulty in recognizing a lofty tone in their poetry.

The second feature of the journal is catharsis. This is no small consideration. Within our educational structure students operate under persistent pressure which is not always of an academic nature. Sometimes it is difficult for teachers to remember that students are not always prepared emotionally for the adjustments of the school day, teacher personalities, course requirements, and peer group pressures. The journal is a means through which students can voice their despairs, their anxieties, their anticipations.

The third feature is individual instruction. With predictions that urban centers can expect 70-75 percent of the country's population in the next decade, teachers must seek not only more ways for individualizing instruction but also for individualizing attention as well. The journal is a means of accommodating some of these concerns while fulfilling wherever possible the pedagogical maxim of one teacher for every student. This fulfillment materializes more in the next feature of the journal.

Many teachers would agree that students need more constructive outlets for voicing their opinions and feelings, and we are continually trying to find new avenues. But once an avenue is developed the important factor is providing an audience. Nearly everyone wants to know someone is listening or reacting to him in some way, and journal jotting provides for this audience—the classroom teacher. If a student begins to respond to this ever-accessible audience, he is also likely to respond more to recommendations for improving the mechanical aspects of his writing. Furthermore, the teacher's function as an audience is closely related to the fifth feature of the journal—guidance.

Few functions in the educational scheme rank higher than the guidance role. We plan much of our curriculum around guidance, and in this writing program it is of particular value. Several examples may serve to illustrate its numerous uses.

Journals reach the student and the situation almost immediately regardless of circumstances because the student, when given an avenue, will voice something which the teacher may want to bring into focus. It may be that the student is having difficulty with his peer group, or it may be that he finds conflict in his family life. The possibilities for orienting a student toward different view points and for affirming view points of his own are infinite; the journals can partially fulfill these possibilities.

With all that any teacher could say about a teaching technique, the ultimate measure of success must be made real by the student. The following are responses from nearly 60 junior high school students when asked to cite the strengths and weaknesses of the journals.

Their comments speak for themselves:

Strengths

1. Freedom to say what you want, when you want, and how you want
2. Relieves you
3. Share your personal problems
4. Communication between writer and reader

Weaknesses

1. Writing daily
2. Shortage of time
3. Need for ideas
4. Audience limitation

R. Glenn Martin
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Star Equals Love

"Let's suppose that anyone who speaks English after the first of next month will be tried and convicted of English and shot at sunrise the next day. What would we do?"

The kids thought about it. "We'd be in a bad way," said Bessie, not, certainly, out of any great loyalty to English, but because she always talked straight, said what was on her mind, and had a feeling for the essence.

"Well . . . like what would we do? What could we do?"

"Stop talking?" This was John, always logical.

"Nooooo," said Bessie. "Never happen."

"Could we *make up* a language?" (John again.)

"Somebody must of made up English." Bessie scowled with distaste.

"We could do as good."

"O.K.," I said. "Where do we start?"

The Upward Bound students thought about it—a half-dozen of them, in, allegedly, for tutoring. Ha! Who wants tutoring on Saturday morning? Life, yes. Tutoring, no.

"It gotta be some words."

"Like what?"

Bessie fogged out. "Just words. Can't talk without words."

"Is that where we start?" I looked around the loose circle. "Words?"

"We got to start with syllables," said John dubiously. "Like the alphabet."

"Remember we're gonna be shot," I insisted. "November first. At six-thirty-two a.m." I looked at Bessie. "Dead. Guilty of English."

"They won't shoot me. I don't speak English. I speak a Neeeegro dialeck." She grinned. "I speak Afro-jive."

"Yes, they will," said John. "Minute you open your mouth, you're dead." He shook his head. "Don't nobody know you in Africa."

"They know me in Black Bottom. All around."

"Oh, come on," I said. "You're as guilty of English as anybody else. Any time you don't know anything better, you speak English."

"Yah," said Bessie. "I'm guilty. So go ahead. Shoot me."

"Well, now you can't talk English. Kaput. What are we gonna do?"

"You tell us," said Bessie. "They just shoot me."

"Yeah," said John. "Me too."

Blonde Mary agreed. "What do we do?"

"Let's start with sounds. An alphabet of sounds."

And we did. "Tell me what sounds you want."

They made some, jangling, not in unison. A sort of growl, something like "b," a snapped finger, some others.

"Hold it," I said. "Lemme write these on the board." I got chalk. "O.K., what's for that growl?"

"A lion." John.

"I can't draw a lion," I complained. "I have no artistic talent."

"A circle." Mary.

"Yeah," I said. "I can draw that. A circle's a growl." It went on the board, elliptical, but circular in spirit. I growled.

"Star," said John.

"How do you say a star?" Bessie.

I pursed my lips and kissed the air.

"That's good," said Bessie. "I can say that one." Much kissing, all of the air, enthusiastic.

Five minutes. A dozen symbols, each with sounds, one to a symbol. "We might survive," I said. "We might not get shot. But what have we got?"

John, contemptuously. "An alphabet. And no English."

"Is this enough?"

Bessie shrugged. "To start."

"*Now* is words," said John. "We can't talk *those*. They don't mean nothin'." He was on his feet.

"So what word do we want?"

"Love," said Bessie. She giggled.

"How do you spell 'love' in . . . what? Upwardboundese?"

"Star period." Bessie again. "Tha's all the language we need."

I wrote it. "Star = love." There it was on the board.

"Noooooo." John imitated Bessie. "Food. Bread."

"How do you spell *that*?"

John thought. He made the whistle sound and a finger snap.

"That's all one word?"

"Yah."

I wrote it.

John, bursting. Star-sound, whistle sound, finger-snap.

"Love food," Mary translated.

"You can say that again." Bessie.

John said it again. Three times.

"All together," I suggested. We all said it.

I wrinkled my brow. "How come that order?" I reversed order. Whistle-sound, finger snap, star-sound.

"Food love?" said Bessie. "That don't make sense."

"How come not?" I demanded. "Just because English puts verb before object, do we have to?"

Profound silence.

John. "I say we don't." He thought. "Object, then verb."

"Man, wha's all that object-verb? You sound like grammar, Dr. Martin."

John: "Come on, Bessie. You had that since the third grade."

"And ain't learned it yet." Mercurial change. "But I know it."

"O.K., then. All agreed? Object first, then verb?" I surveyed the linguists. Blank. . .

"Vote," said Bessie. "This a democracy."

"All for object-verb raise their hands." All hands up.

* * *

The preceding, or something like it, first took place in about October 1967. What it went on to, from some simple and unique phonology, some highly original syntax (object-verb-subject for declarative, verb-object-subject followed by a redundant double finger-snap for interrogative), and a lexicon of twenty or twenty-five words (including some morphemes for plural—like what would be *boytwo* for *boys*)—what it went on to was the vast struggle of making and understanding sentences and the frustration of having to add lexical items for most of the sentences anyone wanted to speak. Tremendous effort, like maybe in 10,000 B.C.

One hour, one new language. Not much of a language at that—but we could all have got by without being shot.

Bessie, the people-lover and language-hater, stood around after the others had left. She was deep in unaccustomed, wordless thought. I answered her silence with my own—two talkers subdued.

"Y'know somethin', Dr. Martin?"

"Not much," I said. But when she answered, I knew something:

"Y'know, whoever made up the English language sure did a marvelous thing."

JOHN H. ZEBROWSKI
Inter American University
of Puerto Rico

Use of Slides and Tapes to Heighten Creative Response

There is nothing new, of course, in the mere use of photographic slides and audiotapes in the teaching of any subject. However, their use writing courses can be creative in ways beyond their employment for the presentation of a rule or other content. The method I have used at Inter American University in Puerto Rico was designed to heighten creativity, to produce involvement, and to bypass verbal barriers.

The following innovations were among the most successful applications of the use of slides and tapes:

1. *Photocopied Slides.* Using a Kodak Ektagraphic Visualmaker, I produced 17 color frames from a half dozen publications such as *Life*, *Saturday Review*, and *New York Times*, including a variety of scenes (both ads and news pictures) published between 1965 and 1968. All photographs were in color. They were presented in a sequence which began with two children watching TV, then to several scenes of the Watts riots, to New York "happenings," and to the final scene of a tranquil mountain lake from a New Zealand travel ad. These were then projected without comment as an "assignment" for a theme.

   Result: tremendously individual responses, including two poems published later in *Pensamientos*, a campus literary publication of the International Student Organization. When read, the pieces by the students produced surprise at the imagination and originality of some and at the depth and intensity of hostility or pity of others. Our use of this sequence of frames from a wide range of photographic sources illustrated the need for structure in the products of research. As well as serving the immediate teaching purposes, this unit served as a model for building others. Some other results of the project:

   A history major produced a historical filmstrip sequence, accompanied by textual commentaries, on Inter American University using archival materials.

One of the essays—"The Steps" (the only remaining vestige of the original farmhouse in which the first missionary school was housed 57 years ago)—has been published in the alumni quarterly, *The Polygraph*. This student is also making tapes of reminiscences by alumni and emeriti for university historical archives.

Another student edited and prepared in sequence a set of slides on his visit to Peru, organizing a lecture which he then turned into a paper.

A Neo-Rican prepared a manuscript to serve as a student handbook for new arrivals to IAU and San German (a 400-year-old city with many Hispanic traditions). It is under revision prior to publication in the fall.

A series of photocopy slides of poets and writers (obtained from books, newspapers, and periodicals) was reduced to a standard 35mm format, permitting the entire group to further acquaint themselves with the writers whose words they had been studying.

2. *Tape Recordings:* Students recorded sounds and edited them into sequence. As with slides, these became "assignments"—to write about as well as to discuss. A particularly effective use elicited unifications through titles students gave for the series as an entity. The range of response to the sequence-as-details underlined difficulty in communication and interpretation, yet afforded imaginative possibilities. A music major in the course lectured the class on electronic music with taped examples. His paper on the subject was the direct result of the initial project.

Two values in these uses of slides and tapes seem to be these: (1) they claim more attention and permit greater involvement; (2) they heighten the creativity and originality of response without diminishing course objectives.

ANGELINE SMITH
Dudley High School
Greensboro, North Carolina

Man and His Relationship to Man

Traditionally, basic textbooks have placed little emphasis upon contributions of the Negro race; consequently, it is essential that collateral readings and materials be integrated with the typical classroom work.

To correlate with the study of *Julius Caesar,* a tenth grade honors class selected two works written by Negroes–E. R. Braithwaite's *To Sir, With Love* and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*–and two works about minority groups–Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and John Steinbeck's *The Pearl.*

This semester project, in keeping with the overall theme of "Man's Relationship to Man," focused on the common grounds of the five works: complacency, avarice, lust for power, loyalty, prejudice, and injustice. These works presented realistic pictures of universal human problems which motivate conflicts. Among the values and philosophies derived from discussion of these works are that we understand people better when we get to know them; that justice must be meted out indiscriminately; that the quality of an individual is not to be based upon the color of his skin; and that there are good and bad people in all races.

Students gained a keener desire to increase their reading habits. Minority groups can identify with characters, conditions, and environments of people for whom "Life ain't been no crystal stair." Yet, textbooks have not communicated to them how numerous underprivileged individuals have overcome almost insurmountable obstacles.

The following procedures were used in teaching these works dealing with personal and social issues:

1. Leading questions and points to be considered were mimeographed and passed out prior to the study of each work to serve as motivation.
2. All students read one work in its entirety before the "in-depth" discussion was undertaken.
3. They made pertinent relations, negations, and generalizations.
4. They then harmonized cases or structured various works in re-

lation to such thematic concepts as culture patterns, prejudice, the invisible wall, superstitions, myths, and philosophies contained therein.

5. They considered other aspects, such as style, point of view, attitudes, appreciations, and evaluations.

At this point in the unit, we moved from the intensive study of the literary works to the extensive enrichment of topics and themes. The showing of slides, filmstrips, and movies included those of my trip to European and Middle Eastern countries. The latter graphically portrayed the plight of people at different economic levels of society in those countries. The pictures of Rome presented the remains of historical sites and settings connected with episodes in *Julius Caesar* and in Roman history.

To broaden our study, the class and the teacher saw either the television, stage, or movie version of each of the literary works and made comparisons between the works and the mass media adaptations. Through these comparisons, students discovered that the mass media presentations frequently omit many salient facts which the original works contain.

To interpret different phases of the works, students interested in art made drawings and collages. Some students took excerpts from various novels and engaged in role playing; others fitted words from the original works to modern ballads or lyrics. Still others—those who saw music as a mode of interpretation—played their musical instruments or brought tape recordings for the class to hear.

During the Christmas vacation, each class member searched through magazines for pictures and articles about Negro heritage; these were placed on the classroom walls and were grouped according to the specific fields of contributions. In connection with this, each student brought in library reports on Negroes who had made outstanding contributions throughout the ages.

Poems relevant to the overall themes were read and discussed. These included, among others, "Lenox Avenue Mural," "Mother to Son," "Brass Spittoons," and "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes.

Library periods were also scheduled so that students could become acquainted with the multiplicity of works about and by Negroes. Many students checked out books on a collateral reading list which they received at the beginning of the school year. Their choices included not only works written by Negroes but also books about them. Among their selections were books such as these: John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*, Jonathan Kozol's *Death at an Early Age*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*,

Dick Gregory's *Nigger*, and Merle Epp's *The Negro, Too, in American History*. Some chose books which treated of teenage problems and conflicts, such as *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Still others chose works which appealed to their fancy—love stories or science fiction.

The written work done by students—whether a paper on a specific thematic motif, an original poem, an additional act to one of the dramas, a different ending or outcome of one of the novels, a critical analysis—was evidence that these students realized, as never before, that Negroes had contributed to every phase of America's history and culture, including art, medicine, inventions, literature, music, and architecture.

The results of this project were gratifying in that students gained a sense of their own worth and of the contributions of their ancestors. They were brought face to face with the realization that they are definitely members of the American community. They were not only challenged to take greater pride and joy in their heritage but were also encouraged to help construct a better way of life for themselves and for future generations. This concept development through exploration and discovery enabled them to gain new insights, to analyze and to judge both critically and objectively.

John H. Zebrowski
Inter American University
of Puerto Rico

Drama as Participation

The majority of students at Inter American University are Puerto Ricans for whom English is a second language. Moreover, only a minor proportion of them come from homes with college educated parents. Thus, in teaching literature, there is a two-fold problem to be met—one of language, the other of background. How, then, might the subject of drama be communicated as part of an introductory course in literature given in English and required for graduation?

When I first came to IAU four years ago, I addressed myself to the subject as I had in the United States. That is to say, I assigned readings and then attempted to lead discussion in class, after which a test, the standard procedure, usually followed. The results were disillusioning. Unlike other teachers who condemned the poor performance and gave out poor grades wholesale, I felt that some better solution could be found.

Since a play is in fact a work whose end is performance, I felt that the gap between print and action, in addition to the barrier of English as an unfamiliar language, might be bridged by the very element of drama itself. I therefore undertook a broadly conceived program which would include spontaneous response, permit employment of Spanish along with the English, and involve students in those principles we had been trying to elucidate by purely verbal means. That aim was to make drama first experiential and pertinent, then intellectually comprehensible (that is to say, conceptually).

The program proceeded in three phases: (1) the introduction of *commedia dell'arte* and planning; (2) play production, including student works; and (3) reading and discussion of plays in the classroom text, as heretofore. Tests were eliminated. "A" and "B" grades would be given to those participating in the class work, all others receiving a "C" (except, of course, for truants or other problem cases).

Commedia dell'Arte. After an introductory lecture on the art form and an explanation of the proposed revision in the learning methodology, I asked the students to suggest situations which might be improvised and performed in the classroom. The response was eager, filled with delight.

This was not something to learn and remember and be judged for. This was something to do—and everybody could do it! We chose themes involving domestic, parental, and marital or courtship conflicts of immediate relevance and called on both English and Spanish speaking students to enact the roles. The spontaneous performances not only created tremendous excitement and pleasure, but they also produced—literally—a fantastic participation by the class itself. I had never seen anything like it before. What had seemingly been docile and apathetic young men and women enduring a teacher presentation became suddenly a lively, bright, and completely involved group of young people. More than once, for the duration of some piquant or stirring situation, the class came close to becoming living theatre.

Once the situation was outlined, the "actors" were free to improvise the dramatic development. Even during the poorer of these "commedias" the attention of the class was superior to the usual. And on several occasions the performances were electrifying. Sometimes the response became so uproarious that other teachers in the building had to ask us to be quieter.

Play Production. In the second phase, after discussion of the *commedia dell'arte* performances, we chose several short plays to perform. I encouraged student choice; in making a choice, the students were obliged to go beyond "the book" and search for plays they felt to be suitable. With a student committee making the choice and the group itself searching for plays, several times as many plays and authors were read and discussed as could have normally been assigned. But there was no compulsion. No student had to read or suggest anything if he did not want to. Yet a majority had a contribution to make. The class sessions had in fact become planning sessions because choice involved consideration and discussion of elements of drama and play production which might otherwise have never been brought in or which might have been considered only as intellectual verbalizing.

Once a group of plays was chosen, the class went into production. Natural leaders emerged, parts were applied for or assigned; then the plays were rehearsed (on the students' own time). Posters and mimeographed announcements invited students and faculty to the evening performances scheduled in the student "Bodega"—a sort of coffee house in the Arts Building. Among the plays produced were Beckett's *Act without Words* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, Ferlinghetti's *The Alligation*, Albee's *The Zoo Story*, and others in English, as well as several plays and scenes from Spanish and Puerto Rican literature.

More important, however, was the emergence of student plays. The

stellar production of this sort during the first session of this learning approach was a bilingual play in two scenes concerned with the problems encountered by Puerto Ricans upon arrival in New York and their subsequent attempts to earn a livelihood. Written by an older student who had worked in a New York garment factory, it had immediacy, relevance, and a high degree of empathy from the audience. It made a stronger case more directly than any teacher could for bilingualism and the need to learn English. Most important of all, it called from the student an effort superior to the mere reading of a play and discussion of it. Here was an effort, a work, by a student who had just made an "F" on her preceding test.

Reading and Discussion of Plays. The final segment of the drama portion of the course was anticlimactic. Reading of such plays as *Antigone* or *Othello,* now accompanied by a greater understanding and response, lacked the charged and gamelike atmosphere of the preceding participations.

The class agreed that in performing they had learned more about the play as a literary form than they had learned from reading, but that the reading now was more meaningful. The method, above all, had been sheer pleasure. If, indeed, the idea of literature is experience preserved, personality presented, reality revealed, then this way of revealing drama by participation was worthwhile.

There was complete satisfaction with the grades as well. The process itself, through the critical appraisals required for evaluation, contributed both to course purposes and to student learning and development.

I prefer to call this classroom practice a learning approach rather than a teaching approach. The students did most of the work and all of the learning. The avoidance of so-called objective evaluation, the departure from the aridity of explication, and the absence of teacher judgments were all saving graces. The participatory approach was zestful, experiential, unique for each individual student.

Literature, reflecting life, may not be measured or quantified except at the peril of abstraction beyond feeling. It must, to be meaningful, be experienced. Our method, permitting involvement and even creation, was experience itself—the learning proceeded from that.

Cosmo F. Ferrara
Rochelle Park, New Jersey

When Do You Have It Made?

When does the world owe you a living? When you have earned it? How do you earn it? Do you have to keep earning it?

These are questions for which some people are trying to find answers. Or even worse—they have the answers. The wrong answers.

John Updike's poem "Ex-Basketball Player" demonstrates the fundamental fact that if you want anything you have to work for it, and keep working for it.

Ex-Basketball Player
Pearl Avenue runs past the high school lot,

Deleted due
to
copyright
restrictions

Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads.[1]
—JOHN UPDIKE

The speaker in the poem feels sorry for Flick. He admired him as a basketball star. But this does not help Flick much now.

Flick Webb's is an experience which students can easily feel, with which they readily identify and with which they must come to grips. It is relevant because it is real. There are thousands of ex-athletes hanging around luncheonettes all over the country, particularly in the black communities. This poem dramatizes but does not exaggerate their lives. Perhaps this classroom drama can help prevent some real-life tragedies.

The poem can be treated differently depending on the maturity and ability of students, but it can work for all. A copy of the poem should be given to each student. A good reader, student or teacher, should then read the poem aloud a few times. The reading can then be followed by an analysis and discussion of some of these questions.

1. Where does Flick Webb work? What is suggested by "Flick . . . helps Barth out"? How is that different from "He works at Barth's garage"? What other work might be done at a garage? Why doesn't Flick do these things?

2. How good a ball player was Flick in high school? How many people still remember how good he was? How does this help him now?

3. What is suggested by "he dribbles an inner tube"? In what ways are a basketball player's hands "fine and nervous"? Flick's hands are still "fine and nervous." Why does it make no difference to the lug wrench? What is suggested about Flick's present use of his "fine and nervous" hands?

4. What kind of a place do you think Mae's luncheonette is? Why does the speaker tell us Flick plays pinball? What does it mean that he "just sits and nods beyond her face . . . "?

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[1] From THE CARPENTERED HEN AND OTHER TAME CREATURES by John Updike. Copyright © 1957 by John Updike. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers.

5. Is Flick happy? Why is he in the position he is in now? Do you feel sorry for Flick? Why or why not? Do you know any people like Flick?

In lieu of, or in addition to the questions, short writing assignments can be fruitful. Some suggested topics:

1. Write a short biography of what you think Flick Webb's life was from his high school days to the present. This means first deciding what you think his present life is (from the poem), and how it came to be that way. In addition, tell how things could have worked out differently for Flick.

2. Without mentioning names, write a short character sketch of a person you know or have heard about who is similar to Flick. How are they different?

3. Does this poem make fun of Flick Webb? Does it make fun of all high school basketball stars?

4. Study these words from the popular song "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?"

> L.A. is a great big freeway
> Put a hundred down and buy a car.
> In a week or two they'll make you a star.
> But weeks turn into years,
> How swift they pass,
> And all the stars that never were
> Are parking cars and pumping gas.[2]

How does this song compare with "Ex-Basketball Player"? Are these "stars" any worse off than Flick? Any better off? What mistake do they make? How is it different from Flick's mistake? How is it the same?

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[2] From "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?"

Charles H. Shelton and
David Marshall
Rocky River High School
Rocky River, Ohio

Closing the Gap

Can you kick the deadly textbook, chronological order habit in an upper middle class high school in a pure white suburb? Can you aim American literature at some of the pressing social and economic problems of today and bring relevance to a bored clientele? We tried and found some success. Our central theme for the year was "The American Dream." We threw out the text and replaced it with films, paperbacks, and reams of mimeographed papers.

We began the year with two films: *The Great Unfenced,* a film about the outback of Australia and its great frontier spirit and the men it produced, and *The Cage,* a portrait of the corporation executive strangling in the climb to the top. The contrast provided a day of animated discussion of today's values. The next day we showed the film *Sixteen in Webster Grove,* a view of suburban life, and compared it to our school and community. Then we asked the classes to write a short paper on "The American Dream," defining their concept of the term. Obviously the discussion during the following days showed a wide variety of views, and some students began to point out that many Americans do not have an equal chance to share the dream. Each class had a secretary who took notes and met with representatives from other sections. They compiled notes which we put aside to examine at the end of the year.

We passed out copies of an essay, "On Running Away" by John Keats, which emphasizes the need for each individual to establish his own values. This introduced our first literary unit, "A Question of Values." We looked first to the future with Huxley's *Brave New World* and asked if seeking happiness was the goal we wanted. We viewed the movie *The Jazz Age,* and students of the 60's saw their parents' lives in the people of the 20's. This film introduced *The Great Gatsby* and led to *Death of a Salesman,* works with emphasis on money and material success as the dominant goals in the America Dream.

Next we asked the classes to look to the past for some idea of where we developed some of our goals. The Puritans of *The Scarlet Letter* and

The Crucible provided some answers. Emerson and Thoreau gave us another view. Then we read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and discussed the beginnings of a black-white society.

In addition to the problem of the divided society, we proposed that the common problem of poverty and the whole complex of urban problems were related to the American Dream. Reading *The Grapes of Wrath* and seeing the film *Harvest of Shame* were popular with the students. Steinbeck began to touch the emotions of students who had previously known poverty as "glimpses of some awful shacks" while driving to Miami Beach for Christmas vacation. Then the class divided into smaller groups and chose one other novel of social protest which they read, discussed in small groups, and presented in reports to the class. They chose either *The Jungle*, *The Octopus*, *McTeague*, *Sister Carrie* or *Studs Lonigan*.

Our next unit was "Suffering and Alienation." We used two films from the Canadian Film Board to introduce the unit: *21-87*, an experimental film showing man alone in a materialistic, unconcerned universe, and *The Red Kite*, a beautiful film suggesting some answers in a world where conventional religion doesn't seem to be satisfying man's needs. This led to the literature selections *J. B.*, *Our Town*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Discussions of suffering, self-knowledge, free will, responsibility, commitment, and love were easily related to earlier discussions of the American Dream.

The last six weeks was a unit of independent study and a study of novels of urban problems. For three weeks students were freed from class except for individual conferences to investigate some facet of the humanities and the American Dream. During this time we planned for some students from each section to visit a large urban high school where 90 percent of the students are black. The students brought this experience back to the class. During the last part of the six weeks, members of the urban high school and their teachers visited our suburban high school and took part in the discussion of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. Obviously this was a limited racial experience, but for many of our students, it was the first contact with a black person other than the cleaning woman. In addition to the Baldwin novel, students read another book from a list that ranged from *Durango Street* to the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. While students were reading these books outside of class, these films and others were shown in class:

1. *I Wonder Why*, a film which shows the thoughts of a young Negro girl who "wonders why some people don't like me."

2. *My Own Backyard to Play In,* which shows the creative imagination of children in a squalid urban quarter.

3. *Time for Burning,* a documentary of attempted racial integration in an Omaha, Nebraska, church.

4. *Walk in My Shoes,* which explores the Negro-American through the voices of Dick Gregory, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elijah Muhammed, and others.

We concluded the year with a look at our definitions of the American Dream written nine months before. Some sobering revisions took place. Some attitudes had not changed a bit. We used an essay by Eric Severeid, "The World Still Moves Our Way," to conclude the year. Severeid recognizes America's problems but remains optimistic about our ability to solve them. We felt it necessary to end with a positive note and plea for commitment.

So the reader remarks, "You've turned eleventh grade English into a course on contemporary problems!" Someone asks, "And what happened to 'Thanatopsis' and 'Snow-Bound'?" Yes, we discussed contemporary problems, and yes, we slighted some poets; but we made great progress in the quality of the many themes written, and classes did come alive with student-centered discussions.

When a student writes, "Next time you pledge yourself to your country, make sure you're not dreaming an impossible dream," you know he has begun to close the gap between literature and life.

Richard L. Knudson
Oxford Hills High School
South Paris, Maine

Something Special

Slow learners, reluctant learners, the unmotivated—whatever you choose to call them, we know what you mean. Educators have long been aware of the slow learner, but little has been done about him, especially in English. Even colleges will admit, when pressed, that American high schools are doing an adequate job in preparing young people for college. How about the employment-bound?

The student headed for the working world has little offered to him in English which could be considered relevant. Usually he has to settle for a watered-down college course. In the school's curriculum guide the main objective of such a course always concerns communication. Courses seem to rely on a great deal of reading-comprehension materials as well as expendable workbooks for "functional grammar essentials." The problem, then, is that these youngsters rarely are able to participate in an English curriculum designed for them.

At Oxford Hills High School in South Paris, Maine, we decided to meet the problem of designing a curriculum which would be relevant and interesting to slower secondary school students. "Specialized Language Activities" is a Title III ESEA proposal which was funded and is now completing its first year. As a pilot project, it deals with fifty-two youngsters ranging in IQ from 65 to 100. All of these students have a history of poor English grades, and 67 percent of them have repeated at least one grade.

Students work in interest-centered units which have as a culminating activity the production of a short drama for videotape or film. Some units studied this year include Crime, Politics, TV Language, Commercials, Parent-Child Relations, and Local Jobs. These units lend themselves readily to role playing situations.

Classes divide into production teams. Assignments within the teams regularly rotate. A cameraman in one production could be the talent in the next. Students work from shooting scripts. The development of a shooting script entails reading, writing, library work, and interviewing. The script describes the physical scenes as well as the message to be

communicated. There are no lines to be memorized. The actor in a particular segment is forced to use his language ability in order to communicate.

Criticism sessions are held at the completion of the segment. It is interesting to watch young participants in this situation. A cameraman will see how he could improve a shot. Most interesting, however, is the student who was the talent discovering an error he has made in language. The students often insist upon retakes.

Improvement in language use has been amazing. Probably the most beneficial changes have been in the attitude of the students. For the first time they are involved in a program designed for them. They are working in teams and developing respect for each other and for self. They find this English class relevant. This sense of involvement has changed their attitude toward school.

LEE BENNETT HOPKINS
Scholastic Magazines, Inc.
New York, New York
MISHA ARENSTEIN
Seely Place School
Scarsdale, New York

Harlem Songs with Strange Sounding Names: Cinquain, Haiku, Senryu, and Sijo

On the chalkboard the teacher had the word CINQUAIN printed in large, block letters.

"Well, what do you *think* you'd do with a cinquain?" a group of fifth grade youngsters was asked.[1]

One column was used to list the children's responses:

"I'd take it for a walk," said Donna.

"I'd ride it to school," remarked Tony.

"Is it something you'd cook?" asked Kim.

"I'll bet it's an animal!" exclaimed Phillip.

The children were then asked what country they thought the word came from. The varied responses included:

"France, because *cinque* is five in French," replied Lucille.

"Spain because *cinco* is five in Spanish," answered Marty.

"Africa, because it sounds like an African word," said Donald.

"New York, because they have everything in New York!" exclaimed Sharon.

The boys and girls did not guess what they could do with a cinquain, but one of them did guess the origin of the word! The disadvantaged child can be provided with interesting challenges when presented with cinquain, haiku, senryu, and sijo, four short-verse forms. Cinquain, a form which originated in America, and sijo, an ancient form of Korean poetry, have only recently been successfully tried in class-

[1] The idea for this lesson was sparked from a discussion on "Writing Poetry," in Lee Bennett Hopkins, *Let Them Be Themselves: Language Arts Enrichment for Disadvantaged Children in the Elementary School* (New York: Citation Press, 1969), pp. 129-135.

rooms; haiku and senryu, ancient forms of Japanese poetry, have already been used with great results with students of all ages.

While working with disadvantaged children in Harlem, we have found that these verse forms serve as a technique for sparking creative writing because:

> All four of the forms have a definite structure, and they are all short. They provide the child with a framework for his writing and, more importantly, he can complete an assignment in one sitting, giving him a feeling of quick accomplishment.
>
> All four of the forms have universal appeal. They can propel the child into writing about reality, imaginary quests—yesterday, today, tomorrow. The child is free to explore and, with the exception of haiku which usually refers to nature or to seasons of the year, he is not bound by a specific topic or theme.
>
> All four forms are free from the many disciplines of poetic form. Rhyming, meter, balance, complex prosody do not have to be dealt with, allowing the child to use a free flow of thoughts and words.
>
> The forms can be tied in with any area of the curriculum. The child can achieve an aesthetic experience even though he may be dealing with mathematics, science, social sciences, art, music, physical education or health.
>
> The forms are inviting because their backgrounds are varied. Also, each strange-sounding name provides instant motivation.

Below is a brief discussion of each of the forms along with examples of children's writings from the Harlem area.

Cinquain is a verse form which was created by Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914), an American born in Brooklyn Heights, New York. The cinquain is written in five lines containing twenty-two syllables broken up in the following way:

Line 1 = 2 syllables
Line 2 = 4 syllables
Line 3 = 6 syllables
Line 4 = 8 syllables
Line 5 = 2 syllables

The following cinquains were created by students in grades six and eight:

Boys! Boys!
I like the boys!
They are so cute and tall.
Girls like boys very, very much.
Oh, boys!

***

Morning
Is when the sun
Comes through the window-glass
And shakes the sandiness from my
Tired eyes.

Haiku and *senryu* are written in three lines containing a seventeen-syllable count as follows:

Line 1 = 5 syllables
Line 2 = 7 syllables
Line 3 = 5 syllables

The difference between the forms is that haiku deals with nature and in some way indicates the season of the year, whereas senryu is not restricted to references to nature. Here are examples of work done by fourth grade children:

HAIKU

Look out the window!
The bird is stopping by to
Tell us that it's spring!

***

The snow coming down
Reminds me how I wish it
Were April. Come spring!

***

SENRYU

The subway runs so
swiftly. Boom, boom, boom, boom,
it sounds angrily.

***

Television sets
bring ads which interrupt my
favorite programs.

The *sijo* is a three-line verse from which dates back to the Yi Dynasty, of 14th century Korea. In English translations, however, sijo is written in six lines, each line containing six to eight syllables. In one sense, the sijo is harder for children to create because of its length. On the other hand, the form gives some leeway in each line, thus challenging the more able student. The following sijo were created by fifth grade students.[2]

BALLERINAS

Lovely ballerinas dancing
On their toes. They twirl round and round
Gracefully! Their heads in the air–
Lovely maidens floating on air–
Jump up swiftly and calmly
And twirl around all the night long

****

SNOW FLAKES

Hooray for white things falling
Fluffy white flakes of joy
Happiness falling from the sky
The feeling makes you shake.
A white wonderland comes in view
Hooray! Hooray! for snow.

Recently, Lehigh University sponsored a Poetry Festival chaired by Dr. Nancy Larrick. Mr. Hopkins conducted a workshop with students, teachers, administrators, and librarians at which the above verse forms were discussed. The participants were filled with enthusiasm at the thought of using the forms with their children. All teachers can experience personal satisfaction, help the disadvantaged child express inner feelings, and take part in the poetry renaissance that is characterizing contemporary times. Cinquain, haiku, senryu, and sijo: The results will delight teachers and will allow students to compose songs with strange-sounding names!

[2]From *Let Them Be Themselves* by Lee Bennett Hopkins, p. 135.

Toni B. Miller
Westerly Parkway Junior High School
State College, Pennsylvania

The Pilot Core Program

Introduction

Title I of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provides funds for authorized programs designed to aid the disadvantaged student. One such program is being attempted on an experimental basis at the Westerly Parkway Junior High School in State College, Pennsylvania. The "Pilot Core Program," in operation for two years, has now completed its third year of experimental program design.

The initial stage of this program secured funds for only one class of 25 seventh grade students. These students had to meet specific criteria to be considered. First, they had to fulfill the status of "culturally disadvantaged" as defined by the Education Act of 1965. Second, the children all had to be recommended for the program by their sixth grade teachers on the basis of their attitudes and reading abilities as shown in their elementary school progress. All of the students were of "average" (90-110 IQ) intelligence, but because of their low grade levels in reading, they were not achieving on a par with their ability levels. Standardized IQ tests did not serve as the only measure of intelligence. These standardized tests are basically reading tests and not valid measurements of a poor reader's intelligence. For this reason, the recommendation of the elementary teacher was vitally important in the selection process.

The program director and his team of three reading consultants visited all the elementary schools that fed into junior high and worked cooperatively with the elementary teachers in the development of reading programs. They were personally acquainted with elementary school students, and they were especially aware of the children who were considered as potential program participants. After they observed and screened the elementary teachers' nominations for the program, a class of 25 students was tentatively identified.

The third, and perhaps most crucial, criterion was parental approval. Each parent was contacted personally and told about the program's objectives. If the parent objected to having his child in the program, the child was dropped from consideration. Also, if the parent, at any time,

wanted the child to leave the program, this request was quickly fulfilled. This third "filtering" criterion reduced the original 25 students to 20.

In the Pilot Core Program, the students met together as a group for their four major subjects: English, social studies, science, and math. Their minor subjects were assigned according to the regular scheduling pattern. One teacher, designated as the coordinating teacher, organized the contents of the four major subjects so that common bonds derived from an overarching theme (for example, communication) could be studied. The coordinating teacher did not *teach* all four subjects. While her teaching responsibilities encompassed English and social studies, her coordinating duties required that she fit those subjects to the contents of the math and science courses. She met daily for one period with the math and science teachers and with the director to plan the activities. The following representative unit will serve as an illustration.

Communication—A Model Unit

The author, as the coordinating teacher, chose the broad topic "Communication" as the unit plan for the entire year. The breadth of the topic allowed for much diversity and specialization. The class began by discussing some of the different means of communicating. In social studies, man's communication was traced from early cavemen drawings to the Fortran language of computers. At different points, students stopped to explore individually one area of interest. One boy worked for three months developing an elaborate "code" which he then taught to the class.

In English, the students practiced communicating without speaking, though hand signals, facial expressions, drawings, and body movements. An art teacher demonstrated that the way a word is written can enhance its meaning: LONG versus long. Words themselves and the ideas they evoked were studied. Communication through literature was also explored in the English curriculum. Edgar Allan Poe's story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," was read to the class at the beginning of the year. The students discussed the importance of communication in the story. The discussion broadened as they explored other stories in which language and communication were important. The point was finally made that literature can communicate in a unique and interesting way through stories, poems, songs, etc.

Communication in science opened up many fields of interest to the students. Some of the boys tore apart radios to see what made them work. A few students built their own walkie-talkie sets. The phenomena

of human speech and human hearing were explained to the class through lectures, movies, and models. The class visited a computer center and actually "talked" to the computer using a new language. They also visited a television studio and learned how sets actually operate. They became so fascinated with television that they wrote their own play and videotaped their performance.

Math provided the biggest problems in coordinating the program. The students came to realize that formulas and mathematical operations were all means of communicating. The film *A Day without Numbers* helped reinforce this idea. The boys worked with scale model cars and the girls with doll dress patterns. The understanding of definite mathematical ideas, proportion and scale, was necessary for the execution of the directions. This exercise provided them with another example of communication and the foundations of form and style for literature.

The Pilot Core Program employed two important concepts. First, the individual student's interests came before any specified subject matter. If a child became interested in a concept discussed or an idea presented and wished to explore this interest further, he was encouraged to do so. A special room called the Reading Center was furnished for this purpose. There was a teacher or reading consultant present in this room every period of the day. The room was equipped with books of all reading levels, filmstrips and a projector, tape recorders, record players, typewriters, paper, pencils, art supplies, and storage space for students' books or belongings from home. If a child expressed an interest in a particular area and a desire to explore that area, he could be excused from any of the four major subjects to work on his specialty under the guidance of an adult. When the interest waned or the project was completed, he was returned to the classroom. A child was seldom allowed to spend more than two class periods a day on his specialty. If he wished, he was given the opportunity to present his findings to the rest of the group. Students were encouraged to present and demonstrate their work and then to make up quizzes based on this work for their classmates.

All of the above activities reinforced many of the reading skills in which the students were weak—without the antagonism sometimes present in a standard remedial reading situation. The students began with something that interested them. Their reading improved because they wanted to learn more about a subject. Reading was never handled as a separate subject detached from any course work. And every child showed some progress in reading at the end of the first year. Sometimes this progress was merely the breaking down of antagonisms; sometimes a child improved one complete grade level in his reading as measured by

standardized tests used in the program. For most of the children, this progress was seen as a positive change in attitudes concerning school.

The second important concept in this program was the merging of the subject areas. English was not restricted to one period a day. The videotaped play in science class demonstrated the necessity of discussing and employing certain language arts abilities. In this way, the students saw some reason for learning to express their ideas clearly and concisely. A garbled sentence became more painfully apparent on tape, much more so than in a workbook.

History was also an important part of the science curriculum. As the students learned what made the radio work, they inquired about modes of communication used before radio and television, and why there was a need for mass media. Mathematics, of course, was an integral part of science, and this was either demonstrated to the students or served as a foundation for other scientific references. Scientific and mathematical terms appeared on the weekly spelling lists which the students devised themselves. Each week the class decided on twenty or thirty words they would like to learn to spell. These words were placed on a big tablet that was kept in the corner of the room. From this list, each student chose eight to ten words he was especially interested in learning to spell. Words concerning a certain student's specialty could be substituted for words on the list. The lists were kept on the tablet from week to week, and a student could choose words from an earlier list if he desired.

The idea behind this spelling list is a very simple one. A student uses English in every class. His knowledge in one class might illuminate or increase his understanding of a concept in another—from history to science, for example. He no longer sees his subjects as complete and lifeless entities. They all become working and necessary parts of his whole educational makeup.

These spelling lists also provided opportunities to teach phonetic skills. After the words were placed on the list, the teacher and the class scrutinized the list together. At this time, the teacher could employ some phonetic skills in a game. The teacher might ask, "Who can pick out the words that begin with a *th* sound?" This practice helped the students' spelling and pronunciation.

Conclusion

The unit on communication is one example to demonstrate how these two concepts—focus on individual interest and the merging of subject areas—were employed in this experimental situation. It would not be necessary to limit the year's work to one unit; however, units must of

necessity be broad enough to encompass the four major subjects. Specialization is easily accomplished within a broad area. It is also important to stress that teachers in the Pilot Core Program did not refuse either their own or the students' ideas because they didn't "fit" into the category "communication." Communication as a concept is so broad that it would be very difficult to find an idea or problem that would not come under its influence. Secondly, the importance of ideas generated by the students or by the teachers was recognized and explored if at all possible. The chief purpose of unit title was to give direction and unity to the program.

Nelle A. Coley
Dudley Senior High School
Greensboro, North Carolina

Rising above the Crowd

Several years ago the teachers of English at the James B. Dudley Senior High School developed a thematic course of study aimed at enriching the impoverished background of experience which was, in general, the lot of the students who come here. At the senior level the overall theme, *Acquiring Self-Knowledge*, is subdivided into five units: Rising above the Crowd, Conflicts in Human Development, Man's Search for Understanding, Superficiality versus Reality, and Man's Inhumanity to Man.

Inasmuch as our school is still a school for blacks, I set up—at the beginning of the term—a brief list of provocative books about Negroes. I deliberately began with two books by white authors, *Death at an Early Age* by Jonathan Kozol and *Black Like Me* by John H. Griffin, because I wanted to explode the myth that all whites are against us. These books were fed into the themes and interpreted in the light of the basic questions posed in each unit.

The unit "Rising above the Crowd" concerns itself with the literary content regarding towering exceptionals and why they got ahead. To the list of such giants as Beowulf, Odysseus, Oedipus, Macbeth, and Job, I added feed-ins like Jonathan Kozol, who uncovered an apparant travesty in the name of public education as he found it in the Roxbury section of Boston; John Griffin, who was willing to *become* a black in order to understand blacks; and Atticus Finch, from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who rose above the crowd because of his willingness to embrace truth and defend an innocent black man.

The technique of role playing was particularly suitable for distilling motivation as the base of behavior. Situations involving characters were described; youngsters acted out (impromptu) the roles described. Then the discussion, thus steered, followed.

Attitudes are changing. Opinions are giving way to thoughtful analyses. The atmosphere for breaking logjams resulting from bias is being created.

LAVONNE MUELLER
DeKalb High School
DeKalb, Illinois

"Happenings": Motivation for Writing

Confronted by what is probably the most difficult audience in existence, the high school English teacher will find that "Happenings" are an interesting and motivating fillip for theme writing. In fact, no recent art form so naturally allows the adolescent—whether highly verbal or not—to express the episodic and oftentimes gaudy realities of his life.

What exactly are Happenings? Some critics view them as "free expression of ideas," artists as "performances in time and space," columnists as "game theatre," in which elements perform in space in a spontaneous, self-contained manner: trucks honk, rocking chairs creak, birds twitter, brooms swish, etc. Dramatists have referred to them as "environments." But the best way to explain Happenings to high school students is to read several of them before the class.

HAPPENING: "SHOWER"
Author: Robert Whiteman
The room darkens. One spotlight shines on a telephone. The telephone begins to ring, but no one answers it. After ringing twelve times, the telephone is still. There is a slight pause, and then the house lights slowly come on.

HAPPENING: "BABY"
Author Unknown
The house lights are on but the stage is empty. A baby in the audience begins to cry. Several people say "ooh" at the sound. The crying continues for several minutes. Chairs creak and a man coughs. Then a lovely young lady, carrying the child in her arms, gets up from her seat and walks out of the theatre.

HAPPENING: "A SPRING HAPPENING"
Author: Allen Kaprow
In this Happening, the audience is asked to sit inside a structure that looks like a cattle car. There are a number of peep-holes in the walls. Suddenly, while everyone in the audience is peering through a peep-hole, the walls collapse; and then the audience is ushered out by a man behind a power lawnmower.

The purpose of Happenings, then, is to present a drama "smaller than life." Instead of dramatizing monumental problems, Happenings portray an image of action in a ceremonious manner. The entire performance may deal simply with a man eating an orange, or with a ballerina getting into a taxi. Happenings place people or objects in an environment and then set the environment into motion.

The episodic nature of Happenings has much in common with the teenager's existence, which is typically a series of small, often unrelated events. His academic, social, and home patterns are characterized by repeated minor climaxes: a girl smiled at him in the hall; his locker door stuck and then fell open, spilling all his books and papers; the teacher kept him after school; he drew ink designs on his hand during a dull lecture in science; the trees tapped against the study hall window, and the teacher then mistakenly accused two boys of talking.

In fact, it was the conversations of the students themselves that started me thinking about Happenings. I have always relished their before-class chatter and their animated talk at the dances and ballgames I chaperoned. Their conversation was a string of verbal Happenings. "We were in the lunch room when Joe flipped his fork across the room. Everyone ducked. But Mr. Jones came, and so we pretended that Joe always ate pie with his fingers." Or . . . "I broke up with my girl. She gave me back my ring, but I left the tape around it. She might take it back some day. I can't wear the ring with that tape around it, but who cares?"

It seemed to me that if teenagers so naturally lived and talked Happenings, they should be able to write them just as naturally. In addition to their regular theme writing, I scheduled one week out of the month for the writing of Happenings. Since most Happenings are short, I asked the students to write five of them—one each day for twenty minutes of the period. It was a spontaneous assignment, but students were expected to follow appropriate composition principles.

The results were amazing. Succinct and dramatic, their brief Happenings were almost a diary of action. There was no doubt that the students were on familiar ground. Even the nonwriters perked up at the assignment. Because length was not the object, students were able to focus on an interesting action without being concerned about meeting standard theme length. Furthermore, they realized that they were communicating real-life experiences to themselves, as well as to their classmates and their teacher. Writing Happenings reshaped their perceptions of day-to-day living.

As one junior boy wrote:

> There was a Happening Saturday night, but the trouble was nothing happened. I showed up for a date, but my girl stood me up. She didn't even leave a note. She just wasn't home. All the lights were out. The dog barked and barked and barked. I was only a stranger. I drove off in the car I had just polished, and I could still hear the dog barking from a block away.

What are some of the characteristics of Happenings that might appeal to the adolescent?

Happenings have no concern for the audience. This is illustrated by the fact that many Happenings are staged in semidarkness or in various places at the same time, as in the three-ring circus. Also, the student should not be limited by teacher-provided models; instead, the student should be encouraged to be original.

Happenings do not emphasize time. Most Happenings are unpredictable in length and form. They do not create any element of suspense; the outcomes are various surprises. Usually, Happenings follow the rationale of a dream. They are usually in the present tense, just as is the students' own contemporary world, expressing a series of small surprises rather than an extended, suspenseful adventure.

Happenings are impermanent. Objects are not neatly arranged, but scattered around the stage or piled together. As in the Happening "Baby," chairs, objects, and people are randomly placed. Thus, one cannot hold on to the Happening. Each is elusive, like the senior prom which for the senior so quickly comes and goes and thereafter is cherished only as a memory.

Happenings have actions and words which are repeated. In "Baby," the child cries over and over again. The phone rings repeatedly in "Shower." A character may continually repeat a word. For the teenager, too, his school life is repetitious: the same class schedule each day, the same "hi" during the passing period which he may utter mechanically to fellow students, and perhaps the same routine dialogue of the teacher in the classroom.

Happenings, then, can be stimulating to the student, for he may now regard his daily existence in a novel, fresh way. Perhaps he even may be motivated to ponder on the meaningfulness (or meaninglessness) of his life and environment.

However, I must warn every teacher who uses this method that there is one predictable response. Sooner or later, a perceptive student is certain to hand in a blank paper—"It's a Happening, right?" "Yes, it's a Happening," must be the reply, "but now it's been done." Students good-naturedly accept this, though they may continue to devise clever ploys.

Antonin Artaud, the forefather of Happenings, once stated that "the theatre must make itself the equal of life." In the same manner, the English classroom, in order to be meaningful to the adolescent, might also do well to make itself the equal of life.

Suggested Readings on Happenings

1. Hansen, Al. *A Primer of Happenings and Time/Space Art.* New York: Something Else Press, Inc., 1965.
2. Kaprow, Allen, and Sontag, Susan. "The Art of Radical Juxtaposition." *The Second Coming Magazine,* January 1965, pp. 20-26.
3. Kotolwitz, Robert. "Happenings on Upper Broadway: A Comparative Dig." *Harper's,* August 1965, pp. 30-33.
4. *Tulane Drama Review,* 10 (Winter 1965).

Jem Bright
North Carolina A and T State University
Greensboro, North Carolina

Teaching "Go Down, Death" from God's Trombones

We began with the teacher reading aloud (students reading silently) the entire James Weldon Johnson poem without interruption. No title was announced. Questions, comments, or responses followed.

The speaker, the place (region, locale), theme, and situation were decided upon. It was also brought out that the poem was a dramatic monologue, an elegy, and its most striking figure (metaphorically) was Death on his swift, pale horse.

Students also commented that a minister was speaking and that the southern idiom was recognized even before a specific locale was mentioned in the poem. Some said that Sister Caroline was probably an ex-slave. (Others replied that nothing implied this—many women work hard in many capacities. "Labour" also has religious connotations.)

It was noted by students that there was a very personal, a warmly human, quality about the speaker who told his readers that a God on a great white throne singled out the Yamacraw, their community, for his personal attention. Other students noted the effectiveness of contrast—the vastness of "beyond the morning star" and nearby Savannah—a device used to keep the attention of an unsophisticated audience, that is, a blend of the imaginative and the real. The sustained but unobtrusive rhythm of the speaker's words, the possibility of a wide range of oratorical devices, and the use of phrases drawn from the Bible and Milton were also noted. In other words, seldom can one find a "funeral sermon" so delightful.

As to a borrowing from Milton, see line 165 in "Lycidas" which begins, "Weep no more. . . ." Students may also compare thematically Emily Dickinson's "I've seen a dying eye . . . ", "Because I could not stop for death," Whitman's "Come lovely and soothing death . . . " from "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones: Seven Old-Time Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1927).

Catherine Howze Copeland
North Carolina A and T State University
Greensboro, North Carolina

A Consideration of Black Bards in American Literature

The course in freshman English composition includes as a facet of its offerings a study of reading the different literary genres effectively. As the class approached this phase of the course, I became more and more acutely conscious of the fact that my students, almost without exception, were completely ignorant of the minority history which would have acquainted them with the contributions of the Negro race to the literature of America. Moreover, most of them had never heard a poem in Negro dialect. Consequently, I decided that during our study of poetry, I would introduce them to some of the Negro poets. Among these was a favorite of mine, Paul Laurence Dunbar. My report of integrating minority literature into the required course of study will concentrate upon the class's study of some of his works.

In our study of Caucasian authors, we had concentrated upon prosodic analysis; thus, in studying the works of Dunbar, the emphasis was shifted to other literary devices. Dunbar's poems were the first chosen mainly because of their diversity in subject matter guaranteed to hold the interest of students. Five of his poems were selected: "We Wear the Mask," "Little Brown Baby," "Deacon Jones' Grievance," "In the Morning," and "The Party." They range in subject from racial attitude, to conventions of religious worship, to home life, to social activities.

By way of motivation, for appreciation of rhythmic quality, and for the sheer enjoyment which oral recitation of the poems affords, I collaborated with my department chairman in taping the selections for presentation. My colleague gave a biographical sketch of the author, introduced each poem, and gave a brief summary; I did the interpretation.

Our first session began with introductory remarks concerning the historical period in which the poems are set, the use of dialect in all except one as a means of giving the poems authenticity, and some of the conventions of the time. The class was told whose voices they would be

hearing in order to avoid dividing their attention between listening and speculation. The students were then asked to relax and listen and to be able to pinpoint the text of each poem. This they did with evident enjoyment. Mimeographed copies of the poems were then distributed to the class for study.

Our first assignment was to look for and be able to delineate the philosophic ideas expressed in "We Wear the Mask" and "Little Brown Baby." At the next class session, such questions as the following were raised:

1. Is it advantageous to hide one's feelings? Why or why not?
2. What may be the result?
3. Would you have assumed the same attitude under similar circumstances?
4. Select the line in "Little Brown Baby" that expresses the philosophic idea.
5. What lay behind the father's statement?

An enthusiastic discussion ensued in which students empathized and relived the happenings in such a way that they were transported to another period in history.

Following this, students were asked to relate in narrative form the series of incidents occurring in the other poems and to decide the author's theme in each. This assignment led normally to a discussion of point of view and a decision as to whether or not the author's use of the first person made the incidents seem more realistic.

Tone quality was the next point of concentration—the sincerity and sadness expressed in "We Wear the Mask"; the frustration of the deacon at the change in the style of church music in "Deacon Jones' Grievance"; the change from joy to anxiety in "Little Brown Baby"; a mother's irritation in "In the Morning"; and the lightheartedness of the characters in "The Party."

"The Party" was the poem selected for its use of sensory language and figures of speech in creating vivid imagery. First, there was the description of the party goers in their splendid attire:

> Gals all dressed in silks and satins,
> not a wrinkle ner a crease,
> Eyes a-battin', teeth a-shinin, haih
> breshed back ez slick (. grease;
> Sku'ts all tucked an' puffed an' ruffled,
> evah blessed seam and stitch . . .

Men all dressed up in Prince Alberts,
swaller-tails 'u'd tek yo' bref![1]

Next came the description of the show-off who accidentally fell into the fireplace:

Fu' he sholy made a picter 'an' a funny one to boot,
Wif his clothes all full o' ashes an' his face all full o'
soot.

There was the "mouth-watering" description of the food served:

We had wheat bread white ez cotton an a egg pone
jes' like gol',
Hog jole, bilin' hot an' steamin',
roasted shoat an' ham sliced cold—
...sweet pertaters, laying by de possum's side,
Seed that coon in all his gravy.

Finally, there was the description of the dancing:

Jigs, cotillions, reels, an' breakdowns,
cordrills an' a waltz er two;
Bless yo' soul dat music winged 'em
an' dem people lak to flew.

Moreover, students were quick to point out the following similes:

1) Dey come trooping' thick ez chillun when dey hyeahs a fife an' drum.

2) My, but Hahvey Jones was jealous!
seemed to stick him lak a tho'n.

3) Wheat bread white ez cotton an' a egg pone jes' like gol'.

4) An' we felt jes' like new sausage,
we was mos' nigh stuffed to def!

Indeed, the imagery portrayed was as Edgar V. Roberts describes Swift's "Description of the Morning"—"a series of little moving pictures, some with sound but mostly visual."[2]

[1] From "The Party" by Paul Laurence Dunbar in THE COMPLETE POEMS OF PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., 1940).
[2] Edgar V. Roberts, *Writing Themes about Literature*, p. 73.

Maintaining our accustomed correlation between literature and composition, I asked the students to write brief character sketches of the deacon who resisted change, the concerned father, the indolent son, the authoritative mother, the placating minister, and the stereotyped preacher who loves to eat and who is not averse to a little carousing.

The students themselves suggested the following general composition topics relating the ideas expressed in the poems to their own experiences:

1. Major Causes of Conflicts between Parents and Adolescents
2. College Administrators' Resistance to Change
3. Today's Parents' Concern
4. So Far We Have Come!
5. Changes in Religious Worship
6. Are Black Power Advocates Justified?
7. My Reaction to Negro Poetry

Literary theme topics considered were "A Study of Point of View in Dunbar's Poem 'Deacon Jones' Grievance'," "The Idea of Deception in Dunbar's 'We Wear the Mask'," and "Imagery Inherent in Dunbar's Poems."

The study of these poems evoked some of the liveliest discussion periods during the entire study of literary genres. Some students even evinced interest in learning to read the dialect and in memorizing some of the poems. Moreover, the students gained pride in the literary contribution of a minority group; they learned to look critically at the devices used by an author which contribute to the full meaning and appreciation of a poem; they became more aware of the enjoyment which oral presentation of poetry can afford. In addition, they concluded that Negro poetry expresses the same philosophies and deep feeling; it exhibits the same literary qualities and universal truths as that of Caucasian poets whose work they had long been exposed to. Certainly, consideration of such areas of literary analysis as meaning, characterization, style, and background influences added greatly to the class's literary appreciation.

Frances L. Enzlow
David Caldwell Elementary School
Greensboro, North Carolina

Helping Second Graders Learn about Their Leaders

The disadvantaged child is a hurt child. He often feels "left out." There is always a need to improve his self-image. This is particularly true of the disadvantaged Negro child. His self-concept is often enhanced by improving the concept of his race as a whole. For this reason my second graders and I decided to find out about many of the Negro leaders in our neighborhood. We did this study in February because of the impetus Negro History Week would give us.

We used the school library as a resource center, with the school librarian as our chief resource person. She selected many and varied materials for our use, including books, films, filmstrips, pictures of the neighborhood leaders (Negro), newspapers, and magazines.

We began the unit study by asking ourselves what we wanted to find out. Most of the questions were concerned with "who" our leaders are and "what" they do. All of the planning was done cooperatively by the teacher and pupils.

Some of the activities of this unit included the following: (1) Pupils cut out and mounted pictures of leaders from the magazines (*Ebony*, *Life*, *Look*, etc.). (2) Special group sessions were held in the school library where pupils also identified leaders by pictures. (3) Leaders of this minority group from the neighborhood were very cooperative. One busy college president cheerfully donated a photograph of himself. A senior high school coach visited the classroom. We also had visits from two nurses, a clergyman, and our school inspector. (4) We went to visit a librarian in the branch of the public library and a manager in a supermarket. (5) Pupils drew pictures and wrote creative stories about their favorite neighborhood leaders. They read poems and stories from books in the library. I read stories and poems about the great leaders in Negro history. (6) We used role playing to enhance, further, pupils' understanding of their Negro leaders. Parents who visited our classroom entered into the role playing with their children. I think the pupils enjoyed this

most of all. We went into the neighborhood and visited colleges, supermarkets, banks, and other business establishments owned and operated by Negroes.

The results of all this has been a small miracle. Quite suddenly one day a group of my students decided they would like to make a bulletin board. The bulletin board is entitled "When I Grow Up." The pupils brought nice large photographs of themselves (in color). We mounted each of these above a wonderful story written by the subject of the photograph. Each story tells what the writer wants to be when he grows up. I smile contentedly as I walk past this bulletin board for I see four nurses, two doctors, an airplane pilot, a college president, three fire chiefs, four teachers, a scientist, and—what's this? Yes, one future president of the United States. These boys and girls are a long way from their goal, but I am content in the fact that they have now set a goal for themselves where there was no goal before.

John Schmittroth
University of Detroit
Detroit, Michigan

Tool, Weapon, Fine Instrument

"Times, they are a-changin'."
English classes ain't
Oh, it's the sure road to extinction
Unless–
Here's a way back, brothers.

At this moment in history, the composition class should be the pulse of the university. Alive young people have something to say. English teachers can show them how to say it–efficiently, emphatically. But nothing is happening. Because we are not listening. We don't know our students.

Today's student is not the crew-cut ex-GI of the fifties; the funster of the forties "digging" the big-band sound; the flasked roadster-driver of the thirties. He is a phenomenon looking for his own thing. An historical analogue is the clerk of medieval times, on whose thin shoulders rested the mind of mankind; one who would gladly learn and gladly teach and riot at Paris and riot at Oxenford.

Today's college freshman is turned on, tuned in; he is the offspring of multimedia; his is an electronic culture whole and intact. He has spent 15,000 hours with television and watched only 10,800 hours of school; he has seen 500 full-length films. He is plugged in to a new electronic literature which shows man in multi-image–from the bland, powdered pimp of Madison Avenue to the lonely long-distance runner; *Hud* and *Cool Hand Luke; The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde; 2001, A Man and a Woman, Lord of the Flies.*

Because of the immediacy of electronic media, because they have taught him so many things so quickly, today's student feels he can sniff out hypocrisy. He has seen the war in living–and dying–color; it is his symbol of our sickness. He has seen his freedoms everywhere strangled–students clubbed in Chicago; Eldridge Cleaver made to flee the country; a young deserter pulled from a church by the FBI; himself and his friends forced into the army against their will. This scene to him is the

Establishment, Big Brother who denies him a voice on campus, denies him a vote in local, state, and national elections, but allows him to pay tuition and taxes.

What can he say, do, be? He can get angry, picket, sit in, confront. But best of all he can plug in to his sound.

Subtle, complex, affecting and effective, his music tells it like it is. Some of it is bad and loud; some of it is good and loud; and some of it comes very, very close to very good art, to first-rate poetry—John Lennon, Donovan, Soul, Simon and Garfunkel (who sing Robinson's "Richard Cory"), Acid Rock, Joni Mitchell (who writes exquisite "poems"), The Underground, Leonard Cohen (a poet who chants "new folk"), Rod McKuen, Judy Collins (who sings Yeats's "Song of Wandering Aengus" under a new title of "Golden Apples of the Sun"—the album title, too), Bob Dylan (who took his name from Dylan Thomas and whose protest "poems" are perhaps the best of all), Joan Baez (with a whole album of "literary" things said and sung, *Baptism*), and Jacques Brel, who flays the mad world in a song called "Next":

> One day I'll cut my legs off
> deleted due to
> copyright restrictions
>
> Not ever to be next![1]

Where do we go from here?

Our first step is to acknowledge and then begin to learn the student's culture. Our role for the next ten years is as learner. What follows is a way to begin.

The composition class should be a workshop in which the whole class or groups within the class work within semester-long "molds" or "models" of New culture.

The teacher's role is to learn along with his students and, while learning, to teach the students the craft of writing.

All writing done in the class must be functional—every writing assignment should pertain to the semester-long study. And, most important, writing should be aimed at some kind of "publication"— a Xeroxed "magazine"; school newspaper, local or national papers or magazines; radio, television, or films; live drama.

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[1] From "Next." Music by Jacques Brel, words by Mort Sherman and Eric Blau. Copyright © 1965 by Hill and Range Songs, Inc. Used by Permission.

Whenever possible, the students should do original research. The classroom should be fluid, with groups moving in and out as necessary. There should be tape recorders and movie cameras available for creativity and for documentation. (If no funds are available for these, drop the tired $7.00 reader and charge a "materials" fee of $7.00.) Artists and controversial figures should be brought into the classroom, or the "classroom" should be taken to them. In several of the projects, two or three members designated by the class should be flown, with movie camera and sound equipment, to film an interview that the class has spent the semester preparing; all effort should be made to "publish" the completed project on campus or local television.

Writing assignments, in addition to the term project, may include a daily log of group work; weekly or biweekly progress reports; critiques of the work of others; letters to the editor of the campus paper or of local or national papers; book reports and book criticisms of primary or secondary material used in research; reports of meetings; transcribings of taped interviews; précés; unassigned creative work; articles and features for a projected publication.

The following are thirty-three "molds" or "models" for semester-long study in an English workshop, by a class or by small groups within the class:

1. On Defining the Establishment
2. Black Consciousness
3. Censorship (local, state, national)
4. Pop Music: A Classification (Start with Ellen Sander, "Pop in Perspective: A Profile," *Saturday Review,* October 28, 1968.)
5. A Readers' Guide to "Now" Culture
6. The Film as English (starting from scratch and making a film)
7. The Rhetoric of Campus Politics (or local, state, or national politics if an election year)
8. An Ideal Curriculum for a Freshman Composition Course (student-eye view)
9. Eldridge Cleaver
10. TV Advertising
11. The Beatles (See Letters to the Record Editor, *Saturday Review*, March 29, 1969, for an interesting "source" of the song "Julia.")
12. Simon and Garfunkel (See *New York Times* Magazine, October 13, 1968.)
13. Writing a Book of "Now" Songs (actually doing it)
14. On Defining Student Power

15. Writing and performing a play, scenario, TV documentary
16. Black Music in America
17. Community Dialects
18. Astrology
19. Leonard Cohen: The Poems and Songs
20. Donovan: The Poems and Songs
21. On Defining Soul
22. Folk: New and Old
23. Black Theater
24. Rod McKuen: Poems and Songs
25. Jacques Brel (Who at the Moment Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris Preparing *Man of La Mancha)*
26. *The Graduate:* Novel and Film
27. S.D.S.
28. Leroi Jones: The Plays (comment and performing scenes)
29. Pop Music: Black and White
30. The Role of Sex (tape recorded interviews with psychologist, sociologist, priest, lovers, married couples, etc.)
31. Underground Music
32. Underground Newspapers
33. Underground Film

Finally, if Tom Paine were alive and well in an English class today, he would probably be asked for a theme on model airplanes or a book report on *Little Dorrit*. As in no time in the past, we have an eager audience to whom we can show that English is a tool, a weapon, a fine instrument. Times, they have changed, brother. We must.